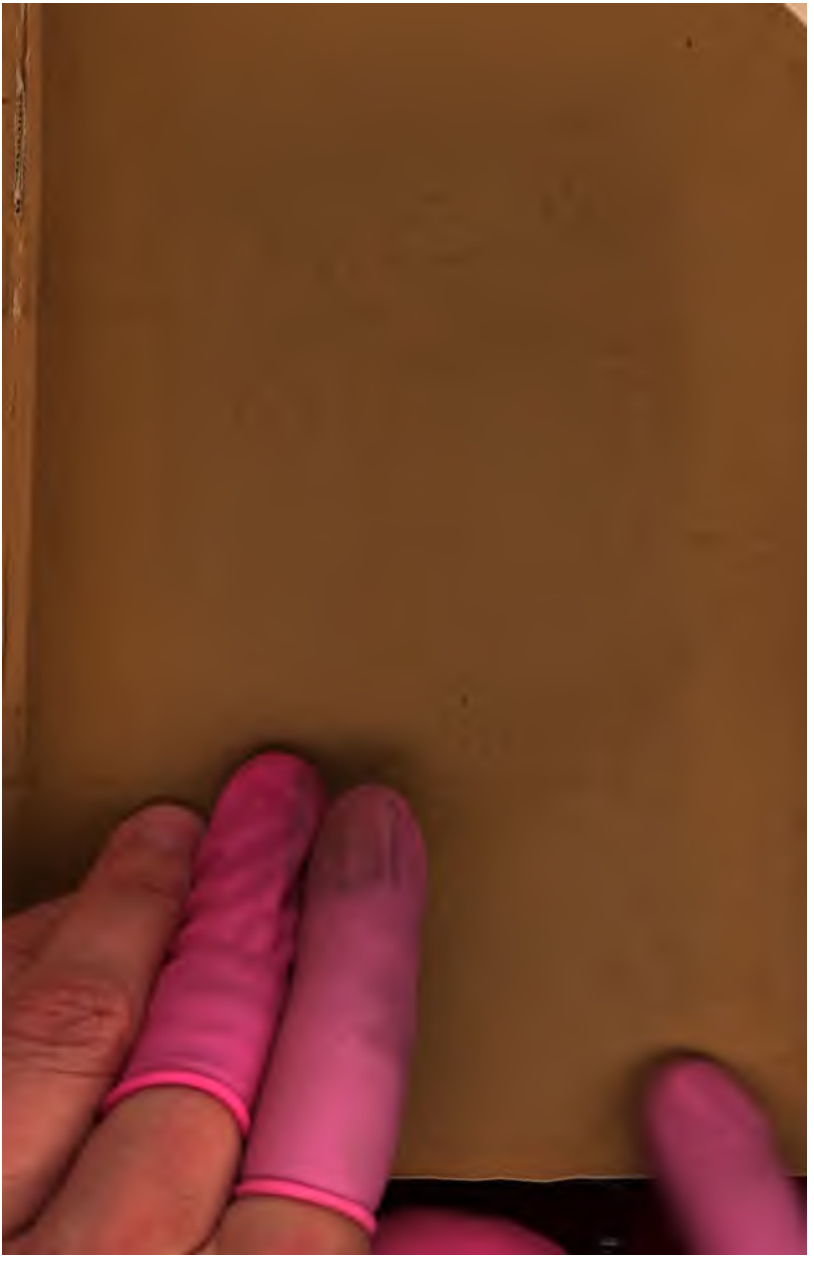

# CECIL AND MARY:

OR,

## PHASES OF LIFE AND LOVE.

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BY

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# CECIL AND MARY.

## I.

### COLLEGE TUTOR.

WHAT! go and leave a widowed mother here,
To walk alone the icy path of age
With trembling steps? Is she to falter on
Through Death's black defile, when your manly arm
Might lead her gently, did you offer it?
Who is to kiss her quivering lips? or who
To stroke her silvery hair? or who to raise
Her feeble form and hold the cooling cup
To quench her fevered thirst? or who to speak
Those words of faith, in the chill dusk of death,
Which only your voice can; and as she turns
And asks for you, are stranger lips to say,
'Madam, you know he left you long ago?'

A dog would scorn to treat a mother thus,
Much more those heathen whom you go to teach
What good men should be. Were it not as well
To stay at home and show what good men are?

CECIL.

Ah! it would grieve her tenfold more to know
That I could not step o'er her grave which lay
'Twixt me and some poor living pagan child,
Than to be hurried to a meagre hole
Without a tear upon her coffin lid;
Yea, than to be tossed out amidst a shoal
Of hunger-frenzied sharks for burial.
'Tis what we do whilst living, 'tis not what
Is done with our poor soul's dross after death
That we should think of.

TUTOR.

Well, be it so, I have a handful more
Of genuine arguments against your going
To bring out yet; prove them all counterfeits,

And then I'll own I'm bankrupt.
The fierce flame-breathing sun of tropic lands
Would eat your life out as it would a fire's:
The icy cold of snow o'er-rinded climes
Would stiffen all your heart-strings till they snapped:
You have not granite strength for heat or cold.
Bethink you, if you went, and then returned
A useless hull, condemned to idly lie
For many a year upon the shoals of life,
Rotting, not wearing out. 'Twere better far
To be a mud barge here and carry dirt.

CECIL.

A useless hull!—nay, I might even then
Serve for an hospital, or even for hulks;
Or, at the least, for firewood. But you err.
It is not those of stout and sinewy arm
That always fight the sun best; some there are
Whom the sun nourishes as he does flowers,
Where he would kill great oaks: and if I die

Some ten years sooner than I should do here,
I shall die twice ten older; for our life
Is what we do, and not the space we live.

TUTOR.

Granted, enthusiast; but if you do less
By going away than staying here, what then?

CECIL.

Oh! no—I cannot—the mere going away
Weighs heavier in the assaying-scales of heaven
Than years of drossier life like this; and if
I fall in the first onset, will not God
Say to me, as He once did, 'Since it was
Within thy heart, thou did'st well?'

TUTOR.

But, hearken! If the heart be strong enough,
The blood will reach the furthest finger tip
Without our aid; and if we only wait,
Will not the noiseless tide of knowledge surge,

Bearing the ark upon its deep broad flood
From Britain, even to the loneliest isle
Which lifts above the sea its hermit head,
And has one single soul upon it? Now—
Even now—that tide has touched the antipodes,
And washes half a New World. Try to make
The focus brighter here, and then the rays
May light up the dim world sooner by far
Than solitary lamps sent one by one
To illumine continents.

CECIL.

But if you saw a palace flaming up,
With thrust-out tongues of fire, as if they mocked
At pitying angels, would you calmly stand
And say, whilst sufferers wildly wrung their hands
From suffocating windows, or essayed
To rush down stairs half embers, 'Men, stand off;
You can do little here—go home and work;
The produce of your labour soon will build

Another palace grander far than this;
Your time will bear more interest there than here?'
But, no—I will not argue thus—the Word,
What says it? God ne'er errs, and He forbids
Such ruthless waiting. The world cannot stay
Till all her veins are filled with English blood
Ere we attempt to heal her.

TUTOR.

Who ought to go, then, and who ought to stay?
Where do you draw an obvious border line?
How many feet and inches are required
For your recruits, or do you enlist all,
As siegèd cities might in utter need?
Women can give their hair for bowstrings, as
They did at Carthage once; or even fight
As now in Dahomey; and timid girls
Might help to carry powder. Tell me, now,
Ought all good men to go and leave the bad
To welter in their slime?

CECIL.

Could you mark off the individual men
Who should be architects, for I could not?
And yet, perhaps, I can eliminate
A letter here and there of a great law
Sufficient for my need. If I have joined
The symbols wrongly, try a wiser eye
For the true rendering. Let him stay here
Who, after many heaven-piercing prayers,
With the great Guide Book in his reverent hand,
And after telescopic scrutiny
Of the few scattered mission-fields as mapped
By those who have surveyed them faithfully,
Thinks he shall bring more glory to his God
By staying than by going; but, oh! let
Him hold the balance fairly, nor put in
A secret wish to make the scale dip down
At the side of staying.

TUTOR.

But you—I know it—you aspire to write

A book worth casketing in human hearts,
And will you hurl away this noble hope?
A good book is a priceless alms from God
Conveyed by him who writes it to mankind;
'Tis like that bulb found in a mummy's hand,
And lives for ages to bear fruit and flowers.
It is an essence of all-healing Truth
Put in a phial for a suffering world
To drink of when it pleases.
Think you that he who mapped the Pilgrim's route
To the Celestial City did more good
By all he did besides, or by this book?
The Indian dreamer tells of animals
On which the world rests, but in earnest truth
It rests upon a book—the Book of books.

CECIL.

Good words are silver, but good deeds are gold.
A martyr's death is more than equal to
The best account of it. Good books are great,

Good lives are greater—greater as a man
Is nobler than the statue which he hews.
But is it so? will books live even as long
As men did once? Of all the fruitful germs
On yon tall oak not one will be a tree.
And, list again, the iron-handed press
Kills millions of its offspring, and the rest
May all be dispossessed by stronger sons.
But let that pass—the book you tell me of
Was written in a gaol, and I shall have
A home to write in.

TUTOR.

But you should wait until the general Church
Sends forth an army. What can one poor troop
Do 'gainst a host but fall o'ergashed with wounds?
You charge their ranks; 'tis just as if one ship
Were launched to press the sea into the earth;
As if, armed with his spade, a man went out
To dig the Andes down, and throw them in
By handfuls to the great Pacific sea.

CECIL.

No!

Paul did not wait; you trust in numbers, I
Trust in ONE only. Does the colonist
Wait till a nation emigrates ere he
Goes out to till the prairie; no, he picks
One little patch upon that grassy sea,
And anchors there his fortunes. Must we wait
Till a huge fleet sails with us ere we dare
To plough a keel into the lonely seas.
Would he who gazed upon a blood-tramped field,
Where wounded men lay scorched with fiery thirst,
Say, 'This poor cup of water, what is it
Amongst so many? I will wait until
They bring sufficient. Must I try to quench
This flaming sea of thirst with one poor drop?'
'Tis not what a man does, but what he tries
With earnestness to do, that honours him.
The striving is the glory, not the wreath
Of fading bay which rings the victor's brow.

But stay! we speak too fiercely, gentle words
Will pierce as warmth will where the hardest blows
Can force no entrance. Cauteries are tried
But seldom, and their scars may still remain
After their wounds have closed; so scorching words
Should ne'er be used, save when the fiery pain
Is meant to heal. We both have surely erred.
I ask, and give forgiveness. Oh, 'tis well
When our beliefs hang like a graceful robe,
And do not muffle us until we fall
And bruise ourselves and others. They who breathe
The thinner mountain air are raised above
The fever-soaked fogs of bigotry.
I think you wrong—wrong deeply—yet I love
All who love Truth; and if your eager soul
Pants after it, as the heaven-soaring lark
Cleaves upwards to the clear eternal blue,
I love you well,—but, oh! throw not your scorn
Against a noble cause; it may rebound,
And wound the hand that threw it.

## II.

### CECIL.

O Thou who hearest prayer, I humbly pray
That, ere this youthful year is white with age,
I may have looked my last on England's skies,
And be o'erdomed by fairer. Yet I love
The very air that kisses her blest shores.
But still my home is elsewhere—'tis in heaven,
And I am but a stranger everywhere.
And may I wish that o'er the sun-seared plains
Of tropic lands my course will be more swift
Towards that grand clime where strangers are unknown.
'But why not stay amidst the heathen here?'
So writes a clinging hand; but if we wait
Till Sin has given us here his stern farewell,
We may remain till the fierce foam-lipped seas
Have torn down Britain to an ocean shoal,
And leap in joy above it.
'Go into the whole world, and preach to all,

The Gospel,' so my blessed Master said.
And shall the sailor sound his rock-meshed track
O'er lonesome, stormy seas for paltry pelf;
The soldier rush up the fire-belching breach
For that which he calls glory, or, perchance,
For some poor handful of blood-stained pay;
The traveller breathe death-saturated damps,
Or take his way o'er ice-encrusted seas;—
Shall these be brave, and he slink back afraid
Whom God commissions as His volunteer
To serve against the fawning despot Sin.
I would not be a petted hothouse plant,
That must have heat and dung, and some poor prop,
Ere it can thrive; but a tall, thick-stemmed pine,
Rocked by the mountain winds, and always green.
Where is the heroic faith which nerved his hand,
The noblest soul who ever bearded Death,
And smiled at his uplifted quivering dart,
Who yearnèd at the faint and moaning cry,
'Come o'er and help us,' and responsive went,

Trampling through all the high-piled obstacles
Which tore with strong-thorned points his bleeding feet,
Nor stopping at the sheer abyss of death,
But marching bravely in. Oh! let me tread
In the blood-spotted but unswerving prints
Of his blessed feet, and calmly go, like him,
To tell of Heaven to those whose blinded souls
Have never gazed on its high emerald gates,
Its diamond palaces and streets of pearl,
Its white-robed golden-winged worshippers.
Ten thousand Christian hands are able here
To point to heaven! oh shame to those who wait
Till wanderers ask the way!—no finger there
Directs the pathless heathen to his home.
And though we fain might hope that some there are
Who reach the better land from every clime,
How few they may be, and oh! who could lean
On such a peradventure, and not snap
So frail a stay? And has not He who was
Unerring Truth, said, they who give up friends

Or home, for His sake, gain a blessed loss,
Even on earth; and dare I doubt my Lord?
It must be so, that those who love Him most
Are loved and blessed most: no, it is not wealth,
Or friends, or home, that can give happiness—
God only has that world-sought gift, and He
Will not pass over those who are the van
Of his saint-army, to reward the rear.
And if my feeble hand should scarce suffice
To lead one heathen from his hideous shrines
To the fair temple of a purer faith,
It may be still that some far stronger soul
Will catch from me his zeal for this good work.
Oh, blessed contagion, may it widely spread!
Who will say friendship cannot be in heaven?
And if friends walk those sapphire plains, then they
Whose earnest hearts throbbed in soft unison
O'er prostrate sin-convulsed humanity,
Will surely rove in love-attracted groups
Along the heavenly hills. Who, then, would skulk

From Death himself, if such a blessed fate
Came at his side, as he strode fiercely on
With sternly-gleaming eyes? Nay, if I lived
Life-exiled from my country and my kin
To a Methuselah age, but then became
The eternal friend of some grand loving soul,
Should not my spirit leap flashing through my eyes
Even at the very thought?
And if I do mistake, I still must hope
Such error to be nobler far than his
Who errs, by loitering in his native land,
When God commands him onward.

## III.

MARY.

Oh, mother, do consent for me to go!

MOTHER.

I cannot, Mary. If I did 'twould be
Deliberate murder, and our friends would say
I cared not, so I got my daughter wed,

Whether she lived or died. Have I not learned
Each weak spot in your strength, and I well know
Your frame would wither ere the unpitying sun
Had burned one summer up. You need, my child,
A giant's grip of life to struggle with
Those violent climes; and would you grapple them
With your frail arms? I know he tells you that
'Tis not mere strength that wins in such a fight,
But 'tis a bright delusion. If he loves,
He will not leave you—love is not a thread
That snaps so easily. This scheme of his
Will become ragged, and be cast aside.

MARY.

Dear mother, no! he is no tall, thin reed
Which bends to every whispering breeze, and sweeps
Back lightly to its place; but a young tree
Which grows its sturdy stem one steadfast way.

MOTHER.

But even trees will bend whilst they are young,

And grow as they are trained. As darkened plants
Swerve toward the light, so will he toward you.
And if he should not, there are other trees
As straight and fair to look upon as he,
And of a grain perhaps finer. If you say
That I think tropic climes would scorch your life,
Aye, burn it up, he cannot surely then
Even wish to take you; if he should, his love
Is such as I would toss behind my back,
And pass on singing, even without a sigh.
Some men have fancies—child, your father had!
He wished to enter orders once, and make
A starving curate's wife of *me*. I said
That he might please himself, but so should I;
And that I would not stay with him to see
Such phantasy made real.

MARY.

Mother, forgive these tears; you gaze at things
From standing points at which I cannot come
For thorns and quagmires. Do, oh do, consent!

I know he will not step aside from that
Which seems the straightest path, but would march past,
A lion glaring by it. Love is strong,
But its best anchor chain will snap like tow
When duty blows, and I shall then be left
An ugly mud bank, with the rusted fluke
Driven right through me. Mother, do consent!
It is not love alone that bids me beg—
I hope not chiefly—I should joy to go,
Because I think it is a heavenly work
To show the path that leads to Calvary
To those who cannot find it. Do consent!
You will not be alone when I am gone;
And oh! my mother, I would often send
Sweet letters home, to lie upon your heart
Like a cool hand upon a fevered brow.

MOTHER.

I cannot, child—at least, let him go first;
He will creep back ere he has been long gone:
Or, if he should not, then perhaps I may

Consent for you to go and throw yourself
Into the crater of an Indian clime.
But, hark, I promise nothing!

MARY.

But you give
Me ground enough to plant one foot upon,
And so to mount a step whence I can see
A gleam of hope on my horizon. Oh,
I thank you, mother! Let me kiss the lips
Which breathed those words of joy.

MOTHER.

My child, my child,
Such kisses are no comfort. I do wrong
To lure you to obedience by a hope
Which I trust to see withered by the sun
Of second love for some one worthier you.
First-loves are like first thoughts, foolish and crude.
The flame of love just kindled oft throws up
Dense wreaths of choking smoke; but wait awhile,

And you will have the spires of yellow blaze.
Be bolder, child, and rend this love away
As you would tear the prettiest creeper down
Which would insinuate itself amidst
The crevices of your ancestral home,
And flaunt about a ruin, if unchecked.
You are not so love-dazzled as to think
That he, of all the men in this broad isle,
Is foremost. I have seen a score or more
Higher by head and shoulders in the things—
Wealth, wisdom, and good looks—which I should love.
What is his old brain-cramming college lore
Worth or to you, or him, or any one?
A thimbleful of honest common sense
Would buy it all. Your father had a friend,
A simple sort of man, who was the first
Of all his fellow-students, and he got
Almost—perhaps quite—two hundred pounds a year,
And shrivelled up his brain with writing books
Which only such as he was cared to read.

I should not wonder if they brought him in
As great a sum as thirty pounds apiece—
After he had spent sixty over them.
I can remember, though 'tis years ago,
That once I saw him dragging nimbly on
His baby-carriage round his garden walk,
And almost thought it was the very work
That he was born for.

MARY.

Oh, dear mother, does
Our squire's grand hall hold half as much content
As the rose-trellised elm-embowered home
Of his old grey-haired gardener.
The squire is rich, and has a pretty wife,
Who married him because his purse was great.
He is a man of sense, too, and she tries,
I do believe, to be a loving wife.
But are they happy? oh! her face says 'No'
Louder than words. It was a fancy once
That gold made potable would cure all ills,

But 'tis a drear delusion. Mother, dear!
I covet love, not wealth—love and a loaf
Are worth a hundred thousand ladyships
With lukewarm looks from him whose eyes should speak
Love's silent language.

MOTHER.

Well, wait awhile until your judgment is
As ripe as is your fancy. We shall see.

## IV.

MARY.

Oh, no! my mother never will consent.
My heart is crushed as by a cruel vice
Turned by a giant's hand—oh stay awhile!
Must we then part and never meet again?
Oh stay a little while! something may chance
To make this opposition ebb away.
Must you go now? I see your eye says 'Yes.
Then be it so—I would not be a pit

Across that heavenward path you wish to tread.
I would not pluck one leaf from that rich wreath
Which you will wear in heaven—no, not to save
Even you, my love, from fiery martyrdom!
From martyrdom! Is one short, sudden leap
Into the grim abyss so bad as death
Drawn out through many years, as mine may be?—
A life-long chain of heavy agony—
Each day a link, and every time I see
India—that fatal word! as common now
As snakes are in it—to have a jagged knife
Driven through my heart with one quick piercing
blow,
And left there till I see or hear again
Something that minds me of you—is this worse
Or better than the rack of former days?

CECIL.

Not part and never meet again, my love,
But part and soon re-meet—here or in heaven!
And why not here? but if that cannot be,

I may reach first our everlasting home,
And when you step upon the flowery bank
Beyond the stream of death, I will be there,
One of a snowy band of welcoming friends,
To take your hand and lead you o'er the fields
Turfed with a fragrant maze of mossy flowers
Of myriad hues and forms, but all so fair
That you will fear to trample them; and we
Will enter with sweet songs the crystal gates
Of the gold-paved city, there to bring
You to the feet of Him—our Saviour Lord.
Oh! grieve not thus, my own—my heart is sad;
And as still seas may cover jagged rocks,
So may a calm face hide a troubled mind.
But let us weep as though we wept not—life
Is but a flake of snow that falls upon
A lava stream, and is exhaled away.
We are dying now, and every breath we give
Makes our small sum of life a fraction less.
We may have loved too fondly; God endures

No idol worship—He alone must have
The inner sanctuary of the soul.
He sees our grief; there is not one sere leaf
That flutters in the very deepest depths
Of any dense dark forest which is not
His special care, nor can we drop one tear
Where He o'erlooks it—let us trust in Him.
He first prepares with His unerring hand,
Then measures out with His grand sleepless eyes
Each cup of sorrow given to better us.
He never puts a burden upon us
Till we are strengthened by Him for our load,
And every sigh that pulses through the air
Finds echoes in His heart—for 'Jesus wept.'
'Tis for our good this grief. The thunder clears
The air for thousands, though it cleaves one tree;
And when it strikes a life out, still it sears
These words, '*Fear God*,' upon a thousand souls
Deeper than they before were. God is Love,
And Love—oh! Mary—love can never wrong.

MARY.

'Tis true, love—I do err—and my poor heart
Throbs out such tides of sorrow that my head
Is giddied, and I reason ill—but, oh!
I have not climbed to those calm skyey heights
Above the clouds and mists where you are now.
Bear with me, if I stumble as I walk;
My soul mounts upwards, though my sluggish feet
Are slow to follow it. Alas, alas!
I might have stood upon that sunny slope
Where you stand now, with nothing but God's smile
'Tween you and heaven, whilst I look up and see
A murky lurid fire-veined thunder-cloud
Hanging right o'er me, and quite blotting out
Heaven's azure ceiling—oh, 'tis sad!—'tis sad
To feel as I have done! Cecil, you weep.
My life!—my love!—you love me!—oh, my tears
They drown my words!—I cannot——

CECIL.

Oh, Mary! bitter tears are oft the pledge

Of future joy, and through them we may catch
Sweet earthly scenes, or, better still, a glimpse
Of that grand clime where tears are wiped away.
He who is parting us will make us meet
As shipwrecked friends might at some ruddy hearth
Who thought each other drowned—if it seem good
To His almighty wisdom—let us hope.
Where lava once has flowed sweet flowers grow now.
When I am gone, a patient love may thaw
That opposition which this hotter flame
Does not melt now, and then I soon may see,
Above the bulwarks of some welcome ship,
A sweet face smiling at me as I come
To seek a happy bride. You smile, dear love.
As weeping clouds make the sun-tinted bow,
That autograph of God upon the sky
To recall His promise, so may our poor tears
Have a fair bow of hope beyond them now.
I trust to see you yet my own true wife.
How many have been hindered on their course

By baffling breezes who at length have reached
The steady trade-winds of an even life,
To sail for many a league without a storm!
And so may we—my dearest, let us hope.

MARY.

I smile, but 'tis but the faint gleam, I fear,
Of sunshine through a rifted thunder-cloud.
I feel I am unworthy to be made
Your helpmate in this work; and, oh, my love!
It may be that this is the acrid root
From which such sharp and bitter fruit has sprung;
But how to dig it up—ah, I am slow
At such a task, and it may grow and spread
Till, like some poisonous parasite, it makes
My whole life feebler; and if now I am
Unfit to go, what shall I be, love, then?
But I must strive to hope—our God is good,
And in the heaviest storm of pelting grief
No drop too much can touch me—this I know.

If such a storm-blast do but make my faith
Strike stronger roots, oh, then, it will be well;
But how it sways beneath its anger now,
Until its very roots crack, yet its boughs—
For I will let my fancy cheat my grief—
Its withered ones, will all, I trust, be snapped.
But, oh, you rise to go; farewell, farewell!
Dear Cecil, I must weep!

CECIL.

Oh, do be calmer! One long passionate kiss,
But not the last—oh, no, I hope for more.
Cling to your Saviour, He will hold you up;
Whisper your grief into His listening ear.
And, oh, remember this, that both of us
Are every moment in God's sleepless eye.
And now farewell, my dearest one, farewell!

## V.

MARY.

Oh Thou who hearest every cry of pain

From man or insect, listen even to me,
Not for mine own, but for Thy dear Son's sake.
Thou seest, O Lord, how my weak heart is crushed,
Like some poor ice-girt ship, and I am numbed
By the harsh stiffening cold of utter grief;
But shine upon me, Lord, and thaw my soul
With the clear beams of Thy unclouded love.
I do confess that I have loved too well,
And grieved too much! Forgive, oh God, forgive!
This grief would train me like some pliant bough
Bent down that it may strike into the earth
And bear rich fruit, did not my stubborn soul
Start back again, unwilling to take root.
I have been like a black and stormy night;
But now the gentle stars are peeping out.
O send forth more, and send the tranquil moon,
Now hid by clouds, to give her tender light.
My God, be with him on the unfathomed sea,
Where deep abysses yawn their fearful throats
To swallow the frail ship which creeps along

Right o'er their upraised jaws. Let no fell storm,
Ravenous for wrecks, pursue the doomed ship
With furious wings along a corpse-strewn track.
Let no disease come skulking o'er the sea,
To climb with stealthy step the unwary bark,
A treacherous cannibal, eager to gorge
Its glutton maw, whose ever-craving greed
Ne'er surfeits night or day; but swell her sails
With winds that gladly usher her to land,
And grant him sweet companionship, my God,
With some like-hearted fellow-voyager.
Nor let him grieve too much for her who grieves
Too much, alas! for him. Forgive me, Lord.
And as he gazes out upon the sea,
Which rings him round, as if it marked him off
From all the world beside, remind him then
That prayers of mine are pulsing in the air
Which dries the tear upon his calm-browed face.
And oh! o'ershade him, Lord, in that far land,
With Thy great sheltering hand, nor let him fade

Beneath the withering heat, and when he droops
Refresh him, Lord, with cool and crystal dew.
Nor let him strain to lift a load of work
Beyond his strength, until he falls and lies
Beneath the crushing weight on the sharp stones
Of broken health.
But, oh! ere oft the mourning mother Earth
Has lost her child the Moon amidst the stars,
Bear me, Lord, to him to be his true wife,
To look into his face whene'er he droops,
And smile his gloom away—to weep with him
In sorrow and in joy—to take his load
Of feminine household cares, and make him know
The sacred meaning of the sweet word home,
That type, however dim and poor, of heaven.
And after we have laboured long and well,
And heavy sheaves stand slanting all around,
In the soft twilight of the dying day
Call me first from the field, Lord, for I fear
It would dismay me to be left alone.

And, oh! I thank Thee, Lord, for the great gift
Of his true love. Alas! that I should be
So unworthy of it; 'tis as though a gem
Were given as a plaything to a child.
But teach me how to prize it as I ought,
Nor yet to value it too well; but may
I wear so rich a jewel meekly, Lord.
Hear me, oh Lord, my God, for Thy Son's sake.

## VI.

CECIL.

MOTHER, at last, I come to say farewell.
I can remember when I was a boy,
That once you said to me, 'Cecil, I hope
That you will be a missionary.' Now
That long-sown wish has taken root, and flowers;
The fruit is yet to come, and you will live,
I hope, to see it. Oh! I grieve to go
And leave you here alone, like some old man
Who journeys on till all his wayfellows

Have left him one by one; and yet we ne'er
Are all alone, for God is everywhere.
That wondrous truth is worth a million friends;
And he who feels it cannot feel alone.
Oh! let us set it like a golden orb
In the grey sky of our dim, godless life,
To cheer us with its light and piercing warmth.
But when I am a thousand leagues away,
We shall not still be parted; they who love
Are with each other always, for 'tis not
Mere contact which makes nearness; they who sit
On the same hearth are often more apart
Than those who have a bulging hemisphere
Rising between them.
And then—ah, this is comfort!—we are bound
To the same haven, though not in company;
And when we meet upon that sunny shore
Where every pebble is a perfect gem,
And the deep sands are all of purest gold,
We shall forget that once we sailed apart

A few short winter days; and he who now
Is looking o'er the swell of that grand sea
To watch your coming, gave his clear Amen—
I cannot doubt it—to the heroic prayer
With which you offered me to this blest work:
A sacrifice for you; but such a word
Is not for me who count it a rich grace
To be allowed to go, as you to be
Allowed to give me.

MOTHER.

My son! my son! my first, my only one!
I shall but be a tuft of ragged leaves
When you, my flower, are gone; but hear me now.
To see you led a laurelled conqueror,
The focus of a million flashing eyes,
Would make me weep for sorrow, not for joy,
As I do chiefly now;—to hear your name
Shouted with cannon-voice, till the old earth
Raised up his head and listened to the praise

Of your high-soaring genius, which shot up
O'er all before it, a bright meteor
To dazzle thousands, this would please me less
A millionfold than I am gladdened now.
How many men of strong, calm mental pulse,
Whose genius, too, was not an angel-fiend
With frantic eye and filthy tattered wings,
Will yet stand far off from the eternal throne,
Whilst many a nameless hind, who scarce could spell,
Basks in the soft beams of his Saviour's eye,
Because he loved more. Ah! 'tis love that counts,
In the divine arithmetic of heaven.
Fame, 'tis but noise; and only children seek
To hear it for its own sake. He who sank
A continent beneath the o'er-murmuring sea,
With all its souls, would be more famed than he
Who drained his life out, drop by drop, in toil
To save them—as an earthquake is more known
Than a clear fertilizing stream; and thus
Satan, the worst of creatures, is most famed.

My life is but a bubble, and ere long,
Touched by grim Death's lean finger, it will burst.
We must have parted soon; and, ah, my son!
As you have said, we cannot be alone—
Alone, oh, fearful thought! without my God.
To know that He might leave me, were it but
For one short hour, would be a hideous thought,
Akin to that which is the greatest lie
That words can signify, 'There is no God.'
Whirled round and round on this fire-centred ball,
Whilst pain and want and grief—grim ghastly forms—
Stood circled round with glittering, ruthless eyes,
Panting to rush upon me, and no God
To overawe them—oh, 'tis horrible!
A crawling speck upon earth, crushed to dust
By Death's lank horny heel, and so to end.
Yet they who live and feel not that their God
Is everywhere, and from whose unlit souls
No odorous incense of communion floats
Perpetually to heaven, are atheists too—

A God unthought of is no God.

But I must pause here.

Hearken now, my son:

We who have sailed far down the stream of life

Know better than those nearer to its source

Where lie its perilous rapids, shoals, and falls.

You cannot take her with you whom you have

Most wisely chosen, and absence, like long drought,

Withers the flower of love, or other chance

May leave you loverless; and should you have

To choose again—nay, start not—let her be

A woman worthy of a true man's love.

Use ears as well as eyes—she should be praised

By those who know her, but who fear her not;

And from her lips should fall, like summer dew,

Words wise and holy. Oh! wed not a wife

Whose tongue is like a clock that has no dial,

Which goes, but to no purpose; and beware

Let no foul gold-sores leprosy your choice.

The kiss of Judas once was given for gold—

A kiss which scorched his hard and icy soul.
And be not dazzled by a pretty face;
A phosphorescent sea has rocks below,
And fair-hued flowers may have a worm within.
A face shone through by piety and love
Is beautiful, whatever be its mould.
And, oh! whate'er she be, let her be good;
A reverent-hearted woman who loves God,
And fears Him, too. Write that upon your soul
In letters gilt with sun-fire. But to wed
Is only the foundation, and to build
The temple of a graceful married life
Is harder far. Kind words and kinder deeds
Are gentle rain to the sweet flower of love.
Oh, blow not on it with the blighting breath
Of anger or of sarcasm, lest its leaves
Fall fluttering to the ground: let no harsh words
Strip off the flowers from the unyielding bond
Which links you to each other. Even in jest
Let not the mocking sprite of banter tease

Her gentle patience. Sun her with your smile
When she is joyful; and whene'er she stands
Within the shade of grief, stand you there too.
Pray with her, read to her, lead her gently on
Up the ascent of life, until you reach
That spot whence one of you shall be caught up,
And landed on the golden steps of heaven.

CECIL.

They tell of Spartan mothers—mine is one,
And a Madonna, too. Oh! if I have
Enough of fortitude to wear a brow
Calm and unknotted through the pains of life,
It must but be mine through inheritance,
And not—as it should be—a prayer-gift;
A whole world for a sand-grain given to show
That my poor languid infant-voicèd prayers
Are heard as far as heaven; and yet even these
Are not my own, but movèd by my God—
I do but give Him back what first He gave.

Our very prayers are but the voice of God
Re-echoed by Himself.

I fain would catch
Your mien and gait as you mount gently up
The stair of life, a white-stoled calm-faced saint,
With eyes fixed on the portals at the top.
You spoke of Mary! oh, I trust in you
To pour in oil and wine to the deep wound
Which my departure gives her. You know well
Where lie the crystal springs along the route
Which sorrow-laden pilgrims tread, and where
The palm oases are: oh! guide her o'er
The drear Sahara she is crossing now.
Above the desert haze there looms a cross;
Oh, point her to it, lest her downcast eye
Should miss its silvery form; and if a word
Of yours can drop one lucid speck upon
The rusty hinge of that unyielding door,
Shut by a mother's arm between us two,
I know your steady hand will drop it well,

Nor use or flattery or guile. And now
I thank you, mother, for the words of gold
Which you have given me wherewith to pay
The dues of prudence—here to hoard will be
A filial duty—have you more to give?

MOTHER.

If you should note your health begin to shrink
Beneath the fire-rays of an Indian sun,
Take timely warning; ask some thoughtful man
Of broad experience if your strength will break
Beneath its burden; and, to guide your choice,
Let him be one who speaks with solid sense
On topics foreign to his healing art—
A chain with scattered links, too plainly frail,
Is not trustworthy in its unseen course.
Leap not into the livid throat of death—
Self-murder is not sacrifice; but, oh!
Lure not your conscience to say, 'Go away,'
'Twere better, aye, a thousand times to die
With sword in hand than foully to desert.

My heart would thrill to say, 'My hero son
Sleeps sweetly in the field on which he fell.'
But, ah! to say he basely ran away,
The words would choke me. I should fear to trust
My coward life in any strongest ship,
Lest, Jonah-like, some hungry heaven-sent wave
Should lick me off with its gigantic tongue.
You are not offering for this sacred war,
From any childish love of soldier pomp;
The gleaming casque with downward nodding crest,
The brilliant costume, or the accoutred steed,
Have no false charms to you who go to fight,
And not to dazzle silly girls; and hence
I trust that, if the reeling shock of war
Should hurl you stunned upon the fearful field,
You will not rise dismayed, and slink away.
No picture dashed by Fancy's nimble hand
With peacock tints has set you all ablaze
To look on tropic scenes. You know full well
That happiness is not a plant which thrives

In some climes only; but a breeze that fans
In every land, if we will only mount
Up heavenwards enough along the path
Of reverent communion with our God.

CECIL.

I would not boast. I hope no English grave
Will e'er be dug for me: I fain would give
My body, as I offer now my life,
To India. I dare not rashly say
That I will ne'er be traitorous to her, but
I humbly ask my God that I ne'er may.
Oh! do pray, too. And should there be in me
A germ of faithlessness, I fain would die
Before it quickens: it is no vague wish
For enterprise or scenes of gay romance
That bids me go, but a compelling love,
And because God says 'Go,' if I can read
His sacred hieroglyph on my conscience stamped.
May these incentives be like purest gold,
And waste not in the fire of suffering.

I go prepared to find an earlier grave;
But should the clime seem to evaporate
My needful strength, I may not strand myself
Upon the barren beach of broken health.
I can retreat with honour. I shall go
When the fierce sun has overflamed himself,
And rests awhile till he revives his fires
Against another summer.
But there are spots which the hot-faced sun
Looks on with smiles; and if I cannot brave
His fiercer gaze, I may his gentler mien.
Nay, if this clime should cast me wholly off,
Another may accept me. We should choose
A rugged island in an icy sea,
If we could bring most glory to our God
In that drear place. But I am shutting out
Your words, which shine like stars, with clouds of talk.

MOTHER.

Be not too much with man, but often climb

The mount of solitude, to come down thence
With calmer, purer pulses, and to cull
The scented healing herbs which blossom there;
Nor yet be a recluse, for, though in crowds
We choke each other, still to shun one's kind
Makes us grow stunted: it is in a wood
That trees are tallest, though mayhap less strong,
Than some which battle with the roaring winds.
And so 'tis best to set the crystal gem
Of solitude within the golden band
Of social life, to make a perfect jewel.
But let me stay—I know that I repeat
What I have told you oft; but oh! my son,
It may be you will never hear again
Your mother's voice, nor I my only child's.

CECIL.

Apologies from one whose very voice
Is sacred music! Mother, do refrain—
They are a discord; and such words as yours

Might well be written out with larger stars
Upon the vault of heaven, and seen by day,
That I might never raise my gladdened eyes
Without a message from you. Your last words
May be the best remembered. Give me more.
But ah! the time has come for me to go.

MOTHER.

Farewell, my son! Let not my parting tears
Grieve you too much, for every drop I shed
Is only filmed with grief, whilst all besides
Comes from the fount of joy. Oh! our poor life
Is but one tick of Time's unresting dial,
The opening of an eye, and we shall soon
Meet in that better land whose unknown tongue
Has no farewell amidst its silvery sounds.

## VII.

CECIL.

THAT is the dearest spot on earth to me
Where stands the holiest man. But yet I find

The magnet of a home can draw as well
A hundred leagues off as a single one.
My fancy is a magic optic glass,
And shows my hero-mother praying now
With tears fast dropping on the snowy bed
At which she kneels. Ah! I can trust those sighs
To waft me safely o'er the stormiest seas
Better than any triple-plankèd ship:
And yet I trusted in them once too well,
And sinned with blunt compunction, as if they
Would bribe even the great God. Oh! impious
faith.
And where is Mary? is she gazing now
With absent eyes that see not while they look,
Because the soul behind them turns towards me?
And yet they still can glisten with bright tears.
But I will think no more of her—such thoughts
Have oft proved hurtful.
How gently the old Earth is lying down,
Like some grand monster of the primal time,

To take his rest; how tranquilly he heaves
His ocean breast. Ah! well he trusts that God
Will watch his slumbers with unsleeping eye,
And wake him early with His welcome lamp.
A sentinel star is peeping out to see
If he may warn his fellows that 'tis time
For them to light their lamps and go their rounds.
The moon, their captain, soon will come and scan
With clear calm eyes his gently-pacing guards.
A single sail jags the horizon's rim,
Beckoning us onwards, and I hear the wash
Of waters at our prow, as if they chafed
To be awakened from their quiet sleep
By a ship-monster, or as if they sighed
Beneath the unpitying prow, which crushes them
And goes on heedless.
When my proud hopes were puffed out by the praise
Of kindred friends, it seemed a little thing
To leave them all; but my soft, spineless soul
Crawls feebly now, as if it could not walk.

I have no one like-hearted here to give
A friendly arm, now that I almost faint.
What! have I not my God to bear me up?
How can I fall then? I can pray or read,
Or sing, or talk to some poor Christless soul;
Or sleep, if my dim lamp has burnt too low,
And needs the oil of rest. It is the scum
Of idleness which floats upon my peace,
And hides it with its fetid pellicle.
Life is for work, and not for vain desires;
The man who owned the Andes must have still
A viper round his heart if he sat down
And gloated o'er his mines, though poorer far
Than he who has to dig his daily bread
From stingy soil, or hew it from the gloom
Of fatal caverns. World-sought happiness
Is having work to do, and reverent will
To do it, as God-given and God-o'erseen,
And with a brow sunned by the smile of God.

## VIII.

CECIL.

India! What bright-hued pictures lie rolled up
All in one word!—white-costumed dark-hued men,
Palms, spices, jewels, tigers, elephants,
Hell-brooded superstitions, hideous gods.
A fifth of all the men that walk upon
The grassy rind which domes the central fires,
Dwell on that patch which we call India.
Change Europe to an island by a chasm
Cloven from the Euxine by the shortest course
To the cold Baltic, and you have but still
A second India, whose varying tongues
Are more alike than some in that huge land.
From age to age the mystic Orient
Has pulsed its influence to the distant West.
Palmyra, Bozrah, Alexandria, Tyre,
Byzantium, Venice, Genoa, Portugal,
Batavia, Albion, all have felt the throb

Of this world-shaking tide which floated in
Riches and power on its broad, stately depths.
The spirit-chain which drew Columbus on
To new world-shores was forged in India.
Nay, let us turn aside and take our way
To any cottage, there to roughly count
Some items of the many-columned debt
We owe to India, written out in gifts—
Gifts worn or used daily without thought.
The Hindu even taught us how to count,
And still one-half of all our race drink in
The poisoned waters of their varied creeds,
All flowing out from this world-flooding spring.
Oh! God, put strength into my feeble arm
That, ere it lies stretched out in the still grave,
I may have piled up many golden sheaves
Of full-eared corn in heaven's granary,
All reaped in Indian fields. I fain would pluck
Sweet flowers there to weave a coronal
To place at His blest feet who made them bloom.

Give me an Indian grave, for I would lay
A body well outworn with faithful toil
In this strange land of hideous romance,
Where Juggernaut drags on his blood-splashed car—
The grand state chariot of the monster Sin!
Where subtle Thugs fling out the murderous scarf,
Wrought in the loom of Death by cruel fiends!
Where the young wife ascends the fatal pyre,
A holocaust to Death, tricked out as Love!
Where children suffocate their dying sires
With holy mud! where men are counted vile,
And animals are sacred! where a child
May be a widow, and be therefore cursed,
Not pitied! Oh that Death alone may seize
My hand to lead me from this famished clime,
Where even my weak, trembling fingers may
Feed some faint, hungering souls with Christian bread.

## IX.

MOTHER.

MARY, old Fortune gives you her best smile.
They tell us she is blind, so your sweet voice
Must have bewitched her, or she may have heard
Your praises somewhere; for I really think
Squire Carlton has a liking for you.

MARY.

Oh!
Dear mother, I have feared as much!

MOTHER.

'Have feared?'
What are you saying, child? Why, the old world
Is getting to its dotage. In my youth
The squire's fat steward would have curled his lip
At such a match as you! and here you flout
The squire himself. Think, girl, of Woodford Hall!
With its wide acres; its oak-speckled park;
Its velvet-lawned flower-garden, which might make

One think that there was Paradise regained!
Its quiet lake, where that tall, white-stemmed birch
Shows out its delicate tracery of twigs
Against the blue beyond. I do declare
It makes me half a poet to think of it.
I grant you the old hall is somewhat quaint,
Or ugly, if you will; and then, I know,
That we are of an older family
Than the rich squire, whose great-grandfather was
A valet when he went to India.
What are you starting for! Can this poor word
Drive all the coward blood from your wan cheeks,
Like some gaunt scarecrow frightening a child!
He was a valet, then; but afterwards
A nabob worth a million! and good blood
Is but a watery thing, unless it has
A little gold-dust mixed with it; and then
The squire is really quite a gentleman.

MARY.

Oh, mother, mother! would you have me wed

One man and love another? Can we serve
Both God and Mammon——

MOTHER.

This is insolence.
You talk as if your love were destiny,
Which could not be o'er-ruled. I love a man
With fifty pounds a year; another comes
With ten times fifty, equal to the first
In looks and sense and temper—why, a fool,
An idiot-born, would see her duty then
As if 'twere writ with letters made of hills.
I never could have thought a child of mine
Would be so beetle-eyed. Why, your poor brains
Must all be clotted into fusty curd.
You call this coarse; but it is well to tear
The rank and gaudy flowers of sentiment
From off the massive stem of common-sense,
Lest these foul creepers fairly choke the tree.
You might have been fed on the cloying pap

Of old romances till your flabby soul
Could only rouse itself by some strong dram
Of sentimental nonsense. Ah! it is—
The squire himself is calling. Now, my dear,
I beg you will be civil, for my sake;
Speak nothing rashly, or you will repent.
My darling child——

[*The Squire enters, and some time after the* MOTHER *is called away.*

CARLTON.

Pardon me for this haste; but I have come
To say I love you.——

MARY.

Oh, not one word more!
My heart is not my own, and you would scorn
Instead of loving me if I could stoop
To cruel theft—but hear me patiently.
I feel the honour you would crown me with,
And thank you meekly for it. You have offered

The fairest, richest wreath which man can give,
And I now thank you, though I cannot take it.
Oh, do not speak! you might as soon essay
To stop the lightning with your outstretched hand
And drive its quick flame back, as to turn me.
The warmest words of passion would but make
My chill heart chiller.

CARLTON.

Madam, 'tis enough!
My love is not a famished wanderer
Who craves admittance when he has been told
To go and seek it elsewhere. [*The* MOTHER *enters.*

MOTHER.

Nay, dear sir,
Go not so soon away, I beg of you.

CARLTON.

The purpose of my visit is fulfilled;
Or rather it has failed, and lies all spilt

Beyond recovery; and if I stay
I shall but pain your daughter.

MOTHER.

Nay, good sir,
You do not know her. Do but wait awhile,
And she will get her senses, which are mazed
In the hot whirl of phantasy. You know
It is romantic to talk of first-love,
And vow you will be faithful; she is young,
And, I am sad to say it, foolish yet.

CARLTON.

Her eye gainsays your words; 'tis not for me
To canvass her decision. I had thought,
From her kind manner towards me when we met,
To get an easier sentence. Madam, farewell.

MOTHER.

Girl, you are mad! Was ever mother blessed
With such a daughter? Daughter, no! that name
Is far too good, with such a wool-brained thing.

To throw this offer from you just as though
It were some common pebble, when it is
A costly jewel! If you are not mad,
Then there is no such thing as lunacy.
And all this done—what for?—to be the wife
Of a fanatic, who is just as scant
Of money as of sense. A mere doll's-cap
Would hold his miserable dole of both.
Suppose he dies—as he most likely will—
And leaves you with a batch of boys and girls,
I beg you will not bring them here to squall
And deafen me. Pray stop in India;
Some fellow-dotard there may marry you;
But they are far too cunning. And you prate
Of duty: if this be not Providence,
To have so grand an offer, I should like
To hear your definition of that term.
Is God to send an angel down from heaven
With an appendix to His blessed Word,
Meant specially for you, ere you consent

To change your choice; or are you waiting, girl,
Until the man's face in the moon shall give
The likeness of the one you are to wed;
For certainly this planet rules you now.
Besides, 'tis selfish only to consult
Your silly whim-bribed fancy: think of me,
As well as of yourself. Have I no claim
That my desire should give at least a pull
At the rudder of your will? But now, it seems,
I lived long weary years in nursing up
A rebel against myself! The tiny arms,
Which once clung fondly to me, grapple now
In violent struggle; and the pretty lips
Which used to say, 'Dear mother,' and to run
A race of kisses on my cheek—why, now,
If they but told your mind, I should be called
A second Jezebel! Oh, my dear child!
You should be led by those whose feet have trod
The mountain paths of life till they have learned
The safest routes; for many a pleasant track

Leads down to marshy dells or thorny brakes,
Where adders lurk amidst the rustling grass;
Or to the sudden brink of some abyss,
Dark, deep, and dismal, where you fall, and lie
In the chill gloom, unable to escape,
Until Death comes and drags you out! My child,
I can but mean your good, for my old age
Will soon be stranded on the shoal of death,
And therefore it can matter nought to me
What route you take.

MARY (*alone*).

When God's will and a mother's meet and clash,
Then children well may weep; and yet 'tis but
As if some mighty ship came down upon
A tiny nautilus, for God's great will
Must have free space to go its own wise way.
We speak of Providence, but Satan has
His providences also; he can hang
His bait so that the merest speck of hook

Is visible; but here 'tis plain enough.
A man's worth is not to be counted up
With bits of metal. Life is a poor thing,
But not so poor as that; we must employ
A nobler coinage to compute its worth.
Men are not to be prized, like gilded cups,
By the thickness of their plating. Gold is strong,
And can do much; but it can no more win
The love of a true heart than you could bribe
An angel with a trinket to rebel.
What could wealth do for me? This Woodford Hall
Is but a sprawling pile of brick and stone;
And can that make me happy? I might ride
In a grand carriage; but to be dragged out
By two or twenty horses, in a box
Painted and lined with plush—why, what is that?
I am not now a baby to be pleased
With any finery; and then I might
Wear richer clothes and feed on daintier food;
But I am warm and well with what I have.

I might give much away. Ah! there I grant
That gold is great; and it is pleasant, too,
To feel less likely to e'er drag along
The miry, dreary, stony, lonely road
Of poverty—but stay, I will not speak
As if 'twere possible to be so base.
Can I be traitor to a noble heart
Which trusts in me? No, not if all the squires
In this broad county came and flung their gold,
Coin after coin, before me as a bribe;
And God smiles grandly as I speak these words.
Wealth is His gift, and I dare not despise
Aught which is His; but there are grades of worth.
The prettiest pebble will not buy a pearl.
And to sell plighted honour and true love
For paltry gold, and all that it can buy,
Would be as though an emperor gave his realm
For some bare patch of torrid desert sand,
Or for a drifting field of melting ice.
Let God, my mother, judge betwixt us two.

I am not selfish; I would drag my will
To be an offering on the altar-stone
Of filial duty, were it but myself
I had to think of; but the all-seeing God,
And one whom He has given me to love,
Yea, and this wealthy suitor, *all* forbid
The sacrifice: for could I be so vile
As to wed him, and so to cheat his hope
Of finding one who would give love for love,
Without which marriage is—adultery!

## X.

CECIL.

Oh, God! I thank Thee. How we fear to trust
The puny bark of our poor happiness
Upon Thy sea of love, as if it were
Too weak to bear it up. How soon she comes
Whom I despaired of; yet I have been blest
Even without her. Even, did I say?
Had I not Thee, Oh God? and could I need

Aught else to make me happy? Let him live
A life of reverent communion
With God and love to man who would be blest
Even in a dungeon, whose thick, close-set bars
Cannot shut out the rays of heavenly peace.
And yet Thou addest still a further gift,
To be another flower in the joy-wreath
Which Thou hast laid upon me. Oh, my God,
I thank Thee meekly. Oh, 'tis humbling, Lord,
To set Thy mercies o'er against my sins.

* * * * *

I see her gazing o'er the bulwarks! Ah!
'Tis the old face, so gentle and so fair,
But shadowed o'er by some fond, foolish care.
She sees me, too! Her face has flashed alight
Like some sweet landscape when the clouded sun
Bursts brightly out.

* * * * *

* * * * *

Two years have fled beyond the subtle bound

Which stands between the Future and the Past
Since last we met, and yet it almost seems
As if we parted yesterday. My love,
Have you gone softly on your homeward path?

MARY.

Alas! I stumbled sore, and tore my feet
Amidst the flints o'er which I chose to walk
When first you left us; but I journeyed soon
An easier road, and one which sometimes gave
Sweet spots, from which I caught a distant glimpse
Of the far-gleaming battlements of heaven.
But, oh, my laggard pace! With you, my love,
I hope to travel faster.

CECIL.

Do not trust
In such a feeble arm as mine, but lean
On the firm promises of God. He gives
When we use what He has already given.
Man is a pedestal of crumbling clay,

Whereon to rear the column of our hope;
But one brief promise is an adamant base,
Which would stand firm even if the trembling globe
Were cloven by an earthquake. Yea, 'tis more
A million times than a huge bond to which
Each separate man of all our race had put
His willing signature, writ on his knees.
In the great joy of meeting, our poor hearts
Have throbbed too proudly, and we need to breathe
The cooler air, and fan our fevered brows
Upon the still heights nearer the pure heavens,
Where we should dwell with God's serener saints:
And yet I hope with you, love, that we two
Shall be soul-helpmeets to each other; for
Marriage should be a holy friendship, not
A clasping of the hands alone, without
A cleaving, too, of souls: and if I know
Your sympathies, they yield a silvery tone
In unison with mine, and we shall make
Sweet household music, echoing, I trust,

Though very faintly, the grand psalms of heaven.
Our loves and hopes are similar, like stars;
And yet we may but pitch a lowly tent
On such a sandy base as human love,
Nor rashly build too high, for God alone
Can satisfy our hungry, thirsting hearts.
Marriage and happiness are not to be
Put down as synonyms; no, let us hope
In God, and Him alone, for happiness.

MARY.

I know it, but forget; how oft, alas!
I cheat myself, and say, when I have reached
The crown of yonder hill, I will sit down
In peaceful rest; yet, when I gain the place,
Another landscape still allures me on,
And so at last we reach the eternal sea,
And topple in down the black crags of Death.
And yet already I have gathered up
Sweet herbs of counsel from the field of Love,

Which is not therefore a mere sandy flat
Of flowerless soil. We must not quite despise
The pebbles of our earth, because the streets
Of heaven are set with rubies; though, alas!
This warning is scarce needed, for we hold
Earth's puny stones so near our feeble eyes,
That they shut out the broad o'ershining heavens.

CECIL.

Not to despise the earth, but still to feel
That we are strangers journeying to our home—
Our peaceful home in heaven—should be our care.
Life is but a small porch that leads us in
To the great temple of Eternity,
Whose gorgeous aisles run out and have no end.
And hence the Christian walks serenely on,
Unlingering, and with his heart in heaven.
We scarce have time to think of this poor earth,
For in a moment we shall have to stand
In the great presence of the Eternal Judge,
Who heeds not whether we have worn a crown

Or peasant's jerkin. A rough mass of ore
May far outweigh the worth of a rich gem.
Deem not that I love coldly—Etna stands
A rocky, snow-clad mountain, yet warm fires
Glow down beneath; but it is ever wise
To look at all things in the clear, calm light
Which streams from heaven upon our darkened world.

MARY.

I know you love me—kiss me once again;
And may our love ne'er be a trailing robe
To clog our feet along our heavenward way,
But a warm garment for our daily use.
Marriage is but for earth, but holy love
Will live in heaven. Let us ever strive,
To grow more like to God—for God is love.

## XI.

CECIL.

You have not told me of your mother's death:
'Tis not how a man died, but how he lived,

That we should care for; yet we rightly hope
To front the King of Terrors with a brow
Unblanched, if not with joy.

MARY.

Alas, alas!
You shoot a barbèd arrow through my heart.
Even to the very last my mother held
Her arm across the path which led to you.
She never thought that Death was tracking her,
Until the monster clutched her by the throat
And strangled her! I saw her gasp and die;
And oh, dear Cecil! such a look of woe—
I see it now.

CECIL.

But, Mary, said she aught
Of Him who died for her—one look of woe
Is no sure index.

MARY.

No, my dearest, no!
She never spoke of death, or anything

That told she thought of dying—all her words
Were about life, not death. I have no spot
To plant one fragrant flower of hope upon—
I cannot find a place for my poor foot—
All seems but quagmire. Can you show me, love,
A single patch that is not treacherous?
It would be a cool-fountained oasis,
Fairer than Paradise e'er was to Eve.

CECIL.

Mary, I cannot; let us leave her soul
With Him who does all well. Oh, it is sad
Not to have thought of dying till we look
Into the still, stern, stony eyes of Death.

## INDIAN SOLILOQUIES.

CECIL.

We must be semi-atheists—God is here,
And we forget; yet, if some emperor,
A gluttonous satyr, were but near us now,

How reverent we should be; and yet we stand
With absent heart in the deep gaze of God,
Before whose grand, calm eyes the faintest pulse
Of some dead leaf, a million ages back,
Is just as visible as is the flash
Of some fair angel's golden-feathered wing
Ten million ages hence—those eyes which scan
At one dread glance all thoughts and deeds which we
Have buried in a deep-dug grave of shame,
And grown it o'er with flowers. Oh, let us pause,
And think what God is. His great shining hand
Sweeps the round world along its giant orb,
With all its cities, seas, and continents,
And hangs a universe, with all its worlds,
Upon a finger, whilst no single grain
Of seashore sand drops from His memory,
Nor from His sight, but is as safely kept
As if it were a world close-packed with souls.
How many million hearts are throbbing now
On this dwarf globe, which is but as a point

In one of the innumerable tomes
Of God's creation, and who keeps them all
Pulsating pauselessly! How many thoughts
Are present now in all the conscious life
Throughout the universe! and yet the mind
Of God contains them all in clear array.
How many are the sumless, separate lives,
From man to monad, on this tiny ball,
All God-sustained! and thence gaze dimly out
O'er all the galaxies, those star-dust isles,
Which are the archipelago of space,
And think how many worlds are eddying round
Each separate star, all freighted full of lives.
The mind folds to its tablets, and gives o'er
The vain arithmetic! Could all the men
That ever lived count, in a million years,
The smallest fraction of this infinite sum?
Could any arrow, shot by the strong arm
Of an archangel, fly in fifty æons
Across the threshold of the universe?

And yet we do forget Thee, oh my God!
Nor strive to make our lives a holocaust
Of high communion, speaking all our words,
And thinking all our thoughts as unto Thee.
The good man in the field or on the mart,
Yea, everywhere, communes apart with God.
The word he speaks to me he speaks to Him
Whose ear ne'er missed the faintest midnight sigh.
Oh! what is life? To always walk with God:
To feel that not a pebble on my path
Is there without His special providence;
That not a sunny thought or shoot of pain,
A kind or unkind look, can hap by chance,
But is a smile from Him, the Lord of all,
Or warning glance from His paternal eye:
To feel that all my future is a roll
Held folded in His gentle, firm-closed hand;
That He can see me now as I shall be
A million ages hence, and knows each change
Of the long interim; yea, all the thoughts

Which flit across it like a stream of sparks;
Yea, every simplest deed—no footfall lost.

---

BAD books are poisoned food; and, taken once,
They fuse organic taints in the soul's blood
Ne'er wholly filtered out. A wanton joke,
Read years ago, has still its trail of slime
Across the soul, whose putrid scent remains,
Even though the shiny track has faded out.
And yet we often put this deadly food
Upon our children's platters—aye, too oft
From classic pateras they gather up
The veriest sewer garbage. Oh! 'tis sad
To think how many of our golden pens
Have dipped in poisoned ink; and though their words
Are written grandly, quick infection lurks
Between the pages. He who leaves his child
To random bookshelves, turns a thirsty soul
Adrift into a room set round with phials
Filled with pure water, fiery spirit, or with

The subtlest poison, sweetened, and oft marked
'Delicious' in great golden characters
By an unthinking world. Ah, he who first
Cast forth these upas thought-seeds on the earth,
To grow and spread, what would he give to grasp
The fatal handful o'er again! To have
Our sins, soul murderers, stalking in the light
A thousand years hence! Such a crown of fame
Is a fierce serpent wreathed around the brows,
And gnawing at the temples: yet 'tis true
That every sin is such a fatal germ.
The deed done yesterday will bear its fruit
For ever, and drop down fresh banyan stems
In every generation. He who speaks
A prurient word may have thrown down the seed
Of some foul crime a hundred years away.
They tell us that the first word Adam spoke
Is now pulsating in the elastic air!
His blood runs in our veins—and, ah! 'tis true,
His vices too. Mayhap, some cruel deed

Of Nero's was one fibre in the web
Of harsh words spoken yesterday, which still
Were uttered willingly with conscious wrong.

---

HAS not the novelist erred? Is it his work
To spin out threads for marriage-plots, and weav
A final wedding from them? This but drugs
That poisoned cup more deeply whose sweet win
Fevers our hectic youth, though their hot blood
Pleads against stimulants. Love reveries
Are revels on a glittering, gauzy web
Stretched tight across a crater's smoking mouth;
Or blindfold wanderings down a narrow path
Fragrant with flowers, but creeping on the edge
Of filthy swamps and pitfalls—aye, and past
The fire-tongued mouth of hell: and fiction oft
Is but a thread to lead the wanderer in.
Life is not marrying. That a man be good,
And wise, devout, meek, generous, truthful, just,
Are each a millionfold of more import

Than that he wed, as thousands do, whose life
Is but death galvanized to hideous guise
Of living motion worse than ghastly rest.
Death, and not marriage, is the grand event
For man to think of; he who woos and wins
A bride, whose beauty is the foolish theme
Of fifty poets, and whose dower would sink
A hundred navies, is he therefore blest?
A single hour of converse with his God
Would toss up this as if he balanced
A world against a pebble. Marriage rings
Are no charmed circles around happiness,
And no panacea. Oh, let us teach,
Until by constant dropping it is worn
Into our stony hearts, that happiness
Is but another name for piety.

---

We read our Bibles as a duty, but
Should read them as a pleasure. Is it that
We read them wrongly, circling round and round

In foolish iteration, without thought?
Should we not make them text books, to be used
With prayerful meditation line by line?
We walk o'er the rich soil, and gather up
Its larger surface diamonds, but ne'er stop
To dig out the bright gems and precious ores
Just buried under it. This God-given book
Is a full granary from which to fetch
The seed of thought, and grow it in the soil
Of meditation—a sweet homeward path,
Flowery and soft and shady, but walked o'er
By those who scarcely bend their eyes to look
At the flower-spotted sward—a thick gold key,
With gem-encrusted stem and fine-wrought wards,
To unlock the temple of the universe—
A sacred hieroglyph, which would suggest
Truths numberless, whilst we remain content
With but its richer meanings, or fly off,
As some have done, on huge unwieldy wings,
Into dim dreamland. We should read, and pause

At every line, until we have pressed out
The healing juices, waiting till the drops
Seem to cease running; not that all have come,
But that we are unskilful, and but press
A stalk or two with our weak, trembling arms.

---

WILL the slow world e'er travel to a point
In Time's great orbit, where the clear, warm truth
Will shine across its dark erratic path,
That no man can be great who is not good—
That warriors whose names reverberate
From the blue sky-dome shouted by a world,
May yet be pseudo-heroes, and famed poets,
With glory haloes round their laurelled heads,
Be less than idiots. Oh! what tinselled shrines
We worship at! The man of bloated purse
And shrivelled soul, whose slow, hard-griping hand
Pulls forth his niggard mite with a deep sigh
When asked to give by wet-eyed Charity,—
This stone-souled niggard is a demi-god

To foolish myriads. That pale, sickly youth
Is digging deep through rank and poisonous soils
For that which he calls pleasure; and ere long
The treacherous earth will slip, and grave him in.
That student kneels to fame, and toils to raise
A towering pillar which his fellow-men
May see, and talk of him; and if the pile
Should not crash down ere Death has clutched his hand,
And hurled him from it, still what has he done
But raised a crumbling mass of masonry,
Tempting and perilous to those around,
Who climb its steps or loiter at its base,
And at the best a vicious precedent
Even to those who stand afar and gaze?
That flaunting maiden worships rainbow silks
And gaudy ribbons. A poor gold-clasped gem
Outshines a galaxy, to her dim sight.
Such are the fetishes to which we kneel.
But here* a great man lived, although his name

* Cawnpore—Henry Martyn.

Is written in fire characters too bright
For the weak eyes of worldlings. A small stone
Will hide a mountain, if held near enough;
And so the paltriest things oft veil from us
Things truly great.
Warm rays of joy light up my gladdened soul
At the arousing hope that by his side
I may hereafter pace the soft green sward
Of the sweet-breezèd fields of Paradise,
And climb its undulating grove-crowned hills
In lofty converse, pausing oft to gaze
Across the gorgeous landscape, as it rests
In the bright smile of God, and reaches out
In change exhaustless—hill and vale and plain,
Lakes, rivers, forests, rocks, and waterfalls—
All in one scene, with chastely-blended tints
Of trees, flowers, fruits, insects, birds, animals,
In countless hues and forms—but all how fair!
With golden-wingèd angels, robed in white,
Gleaming in groups amidst the wondrous scene.

Or I may go with him to far-off worlds,
On mercy errands, and as we sweep on
From star to star with speed that outstrips light
As a swift arrow would a tardy worm,
How grandly he will read to me that Book
Whose leaves are firmaments.
It is not outward beauty that makes heaven,
But lofty friendships; and, oh sacred truth,
To be for ever with the Lord—with Him
Whose presence would make hell elysium.
Through fancy's glass I faintly catch a scene—
A lovely vale of Paradise, which loops
Into a plain swept grandly round with hills.
Myriads of angels stand in serried ranks
Upon the gentle slopes, and on the plain
Their Saviour-King is seated on a mound
Of raisèd earth, o'er-rinded with soft moss,
And broideried with chastely-tinted flowers;
An archangelic group stands round below
In reverent attitudes, and down the vale

A prince-like angel marches modestly,
And passes from it to the encircled plain,
When straight a tide of music rushes up,
Whose dying tones reach even the third heavens.
He pauses, gazes calmly round, and drops
His gentle brow, and paces softly on
Towards that spot where sits his loving Lord,
And kneels at its green base. He has returned
From some grand errand, and is welcomed thus.
That angel once dwelt here, and yet his name
Was all unknown to millions who knew well
The blood-red characters in which are written
The autographs of men whom we call great.
He was a warrior, too, and fought with foes
Stronger than men cased round with thickest steel.
He grappled Sin, and slew him, and unloosed
The Syren arms of country, home, and friends
Clasped tightly round him, and still struggled on,
When slow disease had subtly drugged his life
With opiate poisons. He who fain would see

A hero, let him read of this great soul.
Oh! that I could but tread in the clear prints
Of his blest feet; but their grand giant strides
Are far beyond such lazy limbs as mine.
The saints are stars in the black sky of earth,
Sin-darkened; and the silver-orbèd moon
Is God incarnate; and the golden sun
Is God in all His glory, blotting out
With floods of light each puny, twinkling star.
Oh, who can raise us up the jewelled lid
Of that grand word of holy mystery—God?
And show us but a single finger's breadth
Of its rich contents? He of whom we speak
Had caught a glimpse of the o'er-dazzling light
Insphered here, and ever thenceforth bent
His charmed gaze thitherwards; but we, oh God,
Turn off to tinsel glare, nor think of Thee—
Pondering o'er pebbles, and forgetting God.
'Tis thus we live. Oh, did we ope our eyes
A little wider, we should then see God

In everything—in sand-grain and in sun;
In flower, tree, insect, bird, and beast, and man—
In every thought that flashes past the soul,
And every event, though of less note
Than the soft falling of a withered leaf.
It is a new world when the eye sees God
In everything, and when the heart communes
With Him at all times; when the black-cored earth
Is gilded o'er with the pure gold of heaven;
When the loud boomings of the battling seas
Are echoes of the awful voice of God;
When the heaven-pointing mountain is a mound
Raised with one spadeful by the arm of God;
When the quick darting lightning's blinding flash
Is the clear glitter of His golden spear;
When the dread city-razing earthquake-shock
Is the globe shuddering in His mighty grasp—
The enormous sun a tiny lamp slung down
From the great floor of heaven to give us light;
When the tossed branches of the waving trees

Are seen but to be swayed by His pure breath;
When every lily is another glimpse
Of His love for the beautiful; and when
Each insect sparkling in the summer sun
Is seen to draw its life and joy from heaven;
And when all sounds—the song of happy birds,
The sighs of winds, and thunders of the seas—
Are stray notes of celestial harmony
Struck on His harp—the universe—by God.

---

Except a primal few, the granite base
Of all words, are the rest but metaphors?
Some fresh and green, some pale and withered,
And some quite fossilized to stony coal
For daily need, where scarce a trace is left
Of what they once were: and if this be true—
Or whether true or false—is not that style
The richest where the metaphors grow close
And fair and fragrant?
And yet it may be that they but disturb
The mind by ushering in a double thought

And that unmetaphoric phrase is best.
But this is true, that what we say, not how
'Tis said, should ever be our grand concern.
It matters not how fair the fruit may be,
If it is poison, we eschew it, and
Prefer the plainest root which nourishes.
First use, then beauty, but forbid all place
For such a fungous growth as levity.
A witling is a heavy weariness.
Who writes to make me laugh should make me think.
Laughter soon tires, true beauty never. He
Who wins the name of joker gains a wreath
Of flaring poppies as his great reward,
And is despised even by those epicures
Who use him as their fool. Not that all wit
Is a mere ugly tumour of the mind:
It has its uses; but a sharp-edged knife
Must not be brandished in mere children's play.

---

THAT haze of milky light is the faint gleam
From one of heaven's star-archipelagoes,

Whose neighbour isles alone are visible,
Our sun the nearest; yet, to walk across
The sea of space, a thousand sleepless years
Would leave that isle more distant than the spot
From which we started; and to journey thence
To the next star-isle would, 'tis said, wear out
At least five hundred million weary years.
Oh, God! we pass Thy name between our lips
Less reverently than a lordling's—we who are
But atoms, made and kept in being by Thee—
We who but think and speak and do as Thou
Permittest us; whose every pulse-beat is
Another signal that by Thee we live;
Whose every thought nor paints itself nor pales
On the e'er-changing camera of the soul
But as Thou lettest—Thou who takest us
As he who plays upon a self-made harp,
And bringest from us the sweet tones of peace
Or the harsh notes of grief as Thou seest good.

## XII.

### MARY.

CECIL, has your heart ever longed for love
As mine did once? I felt so all alone
In this unloving world, like some poor bird
Far out at sea, with not even a bare mast
To rest its fluttering wings. Oh, it is sad!
This dreary sorrow, when we search around
In vain for any loving eyes to look
With speaking glance into our own—a child
To love and to caress would have been dear.
And yet I know 'twas wrong, for God was there,
To be my never-absent Lord and Friend.
And earthly love can no more fill the heart
Than could one drop of dew flung in the sea
Make its salt waters sweet; but then I deemed
That to be fully blest was but to love
And to be loved again.

CECIL.

I know this grief, and yet I must believe
That there are nobler souls to whom 'tis given
To love God only, and who no more feel
This aching void than can a darkened space
Be found at midday in the sunny air.
They love God and are loved by Him, and seek
No other love. But 'tis not so with us.
'Let those who can, receive it,' said our Lord.
And yet our earthly love should be a prop
For us to grow up heavenwards. 'Tis from God
That all in you which makes me love you comes;
And we must still remember your great truth,
That the poor muddy draught of human love
Can no more quench the soul's infinite thirst
Than could a dew-drop thrown upon the sun
Extinguish its clear flame.

MARY.

And then harsh Death
Tears from us those we love, and hence to be

At his cold mercy would be drear indeed.
No, 'tis to God that we must ever look
For happiness, and not to aught in earth
Or heaven besides.

CECIL.

Friendship and earthly love
Are narrow channels by which God may send
His cooling waters to the sun-burnt soil
Of human life; but He can shower down
The freshening flood direct from the pure heavens
Without such aids—and yet they have their use.
Even He who is our great Exemplar had
The one disciple whom he loved; so we
Are not to turn away from all our race
In haughty isolation, but to love
All who are lovely.

MARY.

And thus I love you.

---

CECIL (*sol.*).

POEMS should be organ music; but too oft
We play harsh, noisy discords, with no tones
Which fall as echoes from the grander chords
Swept off by angel hands from golden harps.
The poet-king saw in the trees and hills
But letters in that manuscript of God
The universe; whilst we go maundering on
About some sub-god Nature, which does all,
As if ashamed to speak His blessed name
Who—oh, 'tis great!—sublimely condescends
To listen when we sing with poor thin voice
Our tuneless praises; whilst the Psalmist bard
Stars o'er his lines with the bright name of God
Until they sparkle with the glittering light.
What is this Nature but a soulless corpse?
Fair, yet decaying, as our poets paint
Her ashy features; but when breathed upon
By some God-gifted soul, she glows with life,

And gazes at you with soft smiling eye.
Oh! Thou who art as far beyond the grasp
Of human thought as are the silvery stars,
A million million miles away, beyond
Man's puny outstretched arm; or as the Alp,
Which hides its peak in the thin fleecy clouds
And drives its roots down to the central fires,
Is past an insect's strength to carry it,—
How can we suffer this poor whirling ball,
This floating speck of dust in boundless space,
To fill our souls, until no thought of Thee
Can get an entrance? 'Tis as though we stored
Some golden casket crusted o'er with gems
With mere sea-sand—as if some gorgeous pile
Of fretted marble flashing in the sun,
A grand cathedral dedicate to God,
Were piled with worthless lumber. Oh, my God,
This is not folly, but pure madness. Lord!
Bear with thy creatures still, and teach us now
To live no more a dumb mechanic life

With but galvanic spasms of truer being;
But make us henceforth feel that this poor earth
Is but a kneeling-place for man to pray—
A tent to lodge in for a summer night—
An hospital with many sick who need
Our earnest care—a single grain of sand
Upon the seashore of the universe.

---

How is it, when we speak of beauty, that
We think of faces, as if they alone
Were beautiful? The loveliest mouth on earth
Is still a vent for poisoned air, and bears
A sorrier feature o'er it: we should seek
In words and deeds for beauty, not in flesh.
How soon the hand which pens these poor dim lines
Will be a hideous mass of rottenness!
We talk of fairy forms, forgetting quite
Their filthy contents. Rise not in disgust,
But hearken soberly, and learn to feel
More humbly. Man is but a faded flower,

Fair, but a nestling place for creeping things,
And growing from a rank and weedy soil;—
A lake which flashes brightly in the sun,
Whilst down below lies a foul mass of mud;—
A picture fair in front, but turn it round,
And see what dirt and cobwebs foul it there.
All beauty is from God. The fairest thought
Which ever caught the soul's eye of the poet,
And made it flash with joy, was not his own,
But His who rays out beauty, as the sun
Pours out its light, a never-ebbing flood;
And he who boasts of thoughts of beauty turns
That incense, which should soar aloft to Heaven,
Into a blinding smoke-wreath, which he deems
A glory halo for his vaunting brow.

---

PRAYER is the strongest thing on earth. To pray
Is to make Him your Friend who is all-wise,
All-powerful, and all-good. A little child
Upon its knees is stronger than a host

Of mailèd Samsons. There is nought too great,
Nor aught too small, which man can either do
Or suffer, which he may not make the theme
Of reverent prayer. Oh! was there e'er a soul
Who ever dreamed what patient prayer might do?
How many are the blessings which we lose
Because we ask not, or because we faint
And give o'er asking, or because we pray
At such drear intervals, in such faint words,
That angel listeners well may deem we pray
Because we think it seemly, not that we
Even hope to have an answer. Such dumb prayers,
Which die almost upon the listless lips,
Would never reach God's ear, if that could be,
As they ne'er reach His heart. Words are not prayer,
But the heart's yearnings, uttered by the lips
Or by the heart alone, pulse straight to heaven.
Prayer is communion with the e'er-present God;
The creature speaking to the King of kings,

Who bends to listen with an awful smile.
Who prays, yet feels not that he speaks to God,
Is as the man who communes with his friend,
A thousand miles away, by some poor line,
Without the intercourse of kindling eye
And loving voice; but he who feels that God
Lists to each word he utters, prays indeed.
What recks the man of tinsel pomp who dares
To kneel and speak to the great King of kings!
The presence of an emperor is to him
A paltry type of that heaven-arched spot
The presence of his God, in which he stands
At all times, and above all others then,
When in diviner converse. Ah! to talk
With some mere earthly king would flutter us;
And yet we coldly kneel to speak to Him!—
The eternal King of kings!

## XIII.

MARY.

Oh! Cecil, he is dying. Come, oh, come!
Quick, quick!

* * * * * *

My Herbert!—what—oh God! can this be death!
Oh, no, no, no! Speak, Herbert; speak, my child!
Open those sweet blue eyes. It is, good Lord!

[*Bursts into tears.*

* * * * * *

CECIL.

How beautiful! Oh, who could not believe
That some fair angel had put on the form
Of infancy, and here lay sleeping! Ah,
He *is* an angel now!
Who could have thought that Death could pluck a flower
With such light fingers—not one leaflet torn!
A week ago he played about my knees,

And tried to call me father, but he failed;
And now he is a grand, wise saint in heaven,
Whilst I am but a simple child on earth.
One hour an infant, and the next a sage—
A sage! nay, how much more, a sinless saint!

MARY.

I cannot reason so. Oh, hateful death!
To pluck this bursting bud, when other flowers,
Full-blown and fading, waited thy chill hand.
Ah, dainty wretch!

CECIL.

My own, my dearest wife,
Death is God's servant, and but plucks those flowers
Which God commands him. Speak not rashly. Grief
Will sometimes wildly dig right through the banks
Of reverence, and flood the soul's green fields
With bitter, poisonous brine. My shrivelled heart
Can scarcely throb for grief, but let us think
Not of our loss, but of our child's great gain.

MARY.

True, true—oh, true! but, Cecil, let me weep!
I must—I cannot help it!

[*They both weep.*

He was so dear a child! His face was fair;
But, oh, his soul's face, which we never saw,
Must have been Beauty's very finest type.
And then his winning ways! How he would come
And lean upon your knee, and bend his head
A little sideways, like some graceful flower
Bent by a soft breeze, as he peeped to see
If you were in the humour for his play.
I feel his little arms going round my neck,
And his soft cheek pressed lovingly to mine.
Ah, how he had twined round me! and to tear
This fairy creeper down has almost brought
The prop along with it: and his bright laugh,
What sweetest music was one half so sweet?
It was a daily chorus in our home,

To tell us that the great God loves to see
His children happy. In my dreams last night
I heard it once again. I wonder, love,
If the saints laugh in heaven, for I should like
To hear that silvery sound when I go there.

CECIL.

I hoped that he would join me in the field
When my weak hands grew weaker; but I see
That God has work for him in Paradise
Which must not wait.
I thought to see him toiling bravely here;
But some far grander work has called him there:
And when we meet him in that blessed land
Of sapphire skies and golden-tinted clouds,
Where life is one long thrill of tranquil joy—
One sweet, soft-pealing psalm of ceaseless praise—
How that great thought will fill our happy souls,
As some clear bell a church with its pure tones,—
'We meet to part no more!'

MARY.

But, Cecil, you are wrong; such death as this
Is chastisement, not mercy.

CECIL.

Ah, it is!
It is!—nay, Mary, it is both. I know
It is not fit that children should be gay
When fathers punish them; 'tis well to grieve,
But not to murmur—that is a harsh scream
In the soft, plaintive chant of patient grief.
And yet, as those who lay a listening ear
Near the dumb earth, and catch an undertone
Of an approaching foe, so can I list
The footsteps of rebellion in my soul;
But seeing me aroused, he skulks away,
And tries again another, stiller path.
I feel it, love, that death in infancy
Seems cruel waste, as though a sapling vine

Were torn up by the roots; but, ah, this cuts
The strangling knot. God does not kill the plant,
But just removes it to a richer soil
And sunnier skies. He takes a costly gem
From out the trampled soil of this poor earth,
And sets it in a grand, soft-glittering shrine.
He takes an exile from this arctic clime,
Foggy and cold and dark and desolate,
To his rich, blue-skied, sunny native land.

* * * * * *

MARY.

When discontent would track us, it is well
To hide amidst the trees of Paradise,
As you do, Cecil; but, alas, alas!
My sobs betray my hiding-place; and yet
It must be right to weep an only child.
A bride will blot her marriage-veil with tears;
A slave must still be sad, if they took off
His only son to make him even a king.

CECIL.

When God chastises, to refuse to mourn
Is foul irreverence; but, my dearest wife,
Our duties are all children of one God,
And no one of them turns out all the rest
To seize himself the palace of the soul.
They live together in calm peace and love.
But, Mary, grief with you is absolute,
And all the rest stand shivering at the doors.
My grief is double. I have lost a child;
And though my words may seem but cold, my heart
Is scorched with sorrow. I shall lose my wife
If she mourns thus, and am I then to say
She died because she would not be resigned
To the good will of God?——

MARY.

Nay, speak no more,
But pray for my forgiveness. Let us kneel
Together, Cecil.

## XIV.

MOTHER.

THIS must be death! Take care to tell my son
That I died happy. Once I vainly thought
It would be sad to die with neither child
Nor husband near me, as if God's firm hand
Was not enough to bear me up across
Death's narrow torrent. Ah, my faithless heart,
How easily I wade it, scarce a stone
Catches my joyous foot; and tell him, too,
That I have ne'er repented since he went—
Nay, I have thanked my God ten thousand times
For giving me a missionary son.
And once again, before I leave this world,
I thank Thee for this mercy, oh my God!
In His blest name who is my only hope!

FRIEND.

If we give God a simple wayside flower,
He gives us back a wreath of richest blooms—

Yea, a whole garden filled with rarest plants.
It would have been a joy to keep your son
Nearer your side for just a few brief years.
You offer this a willing sacrifice,
And He gives back a happier life on earth
Than would have been yours had you kept him here,
And adds a dazzling diamond to that crown
Which you will wear eternally in heaven.
Our God is love, but we are loth to trust
Our puny happiness to His wise care,
But must be throwing to our paltry heap
Each pretty pebble, till we bury o'er
Its few pure gems; whilst, did we only put
Our little stock in the great hand of God,
It would increase a hundredfold.

MOTHER.

'Tis true!
Oh, had I lived a life of simpler faith,
I should have turned the edge of many a care:
And yet my pathway has been carpeted

With softest grass, and sprinkled o'er with flowers;
And now it ends in a clear blaze of light,
Which rolls out from the golden porch of heaven.
I feel my foot upon the massy step,
And in a moment shall have entered in;
I breathe the perfumed air, and hear the sound
Of the unutterable music now.

FRIEND.

Is this a fore-glimpse of the joys of heaven,
Or does she wander? Blessèd ecstacy!

* * * * * *

MOTHER.

Oh, could you see what I can!—angel bands,
Rank above rank. Oh, can it be? It is—
'Tis He!—oh, look—my blessed Lord, I come!

* * * * * *

FRIEND.

Oh, Death! thy painless dart is wreathed with flowers.
My God, may I die thus! Yes, she is gone!

Life, with its joys and griefs, is now a scroll
Written and rollèd up, and safely lodged
In the archives of Heaven till the Great Day.
What matters it to her how she went home,
In softest velvet or in coarsest frieze,
She now walks softly in the robes of heaven,
And wonders how she could so oft forget
Her grand inheritance whilst here with us!
How Death tears off the tinsel of our lives!
The corpse of a great empress soon becomes
Abhorrèd carrion, and her final dust
Is undistinguishable from a slave's.
We fret and fume our few short years away,
And when we die, what do we leave behind
To be a sign that we have ever been?

---

CECIL.

MAN asks for sympathy; and if you give
Chill kindness only, 'tis as though you kept
A flower in pure air, but let no sun

Shine on it with his animating beams.
The poorest man delights to give as well
As to receive, and can give love for love.
Tell him your hopes and fears, if you would have
The spring that moves his soul beneath your hand.
He then gives sympathy; and, as a string
Vibrates to any sound in the thin air,
So will the chords of feeling in his soul
Give out what echo you may wish to bring,
Until you play upon him as a harp,
And make him breathe sweet music. We have read
Of the wise sage who struck off the strange thought
Of moving the huge earth with some great bar;
But love is the true lever, which would raise
This fallen world, and lift it nearer heaven.
Love God, and love thy neighbour as thyself.
Sublime epitome! a rule of life
Abridged enough for the scant memory
Of early childhood—a whole Gospel written
In one grand line—a Bible in a word

Brought to a focus, like the mighty sun
Through some great lens, to burn up sin and grief,
And make the world a minor Paradise.
Did we but learn it, then our earthly path
Would be as though we walked o'er fragrant flowers,
And scattered out their odours; for our deeds
Would all be sweetly redolent of love,
And grateful hearts would bless us as we passed.
Our lamp of love, in this sin-shadowed earth,
Would lighten many a wanderer straying out
Amidst the foul and fatal sloughs of sin;
And, following our distant-twinkling light,
To kindle his dead lamp at its clear flame,
How would he bless us as he journeyed home.
Even *God* is *Love!* a truth which might be written
In golden suns upon the clear blue sky.
That might be—nay, 'tis written there in stars,
If man could read it; but, alas! alas!
Sin dims his eyesight: yet our God has given

A simple comment to this wondrous text,
To make it plain; and blest is he who reads.

---

WHAT are the lives of millions but a flight
From chasing thoughts of death and hell and God;
A throwing open of the soul's grand gate
To an e'er-entering crowd of vagrant thoughts,
Which hustle out their betters, and rove on
In straggling line across the empty space!
Oh, could their thoughts for only one short span
File past our eyes, what sad fantastic sights
Would come in view! Some laughing as they went,
In idiot mirth, some weeping maudlin tears;
Some counting money, and some reeling by,
Staggering with wine; some leering out their shame;
Some dreaming gaudy fancies with dead eyes
And absent souls; some decked in finery,
And smiling at it with egregious joy;
Some rattling dice, some muttering heedless prayers;

Some whispering lies, some cursing; some with face
Hideous with envy, some distort with hate;
Some hatching vengeance, some bleached white with fear;
Some red with shame, some sour with discontent;
Some simpering with affectation; some
Aglow with hope, some frozen with despair;
Some strutting proudly with contemptuous smile;
Some gloating o'er the feast of yesterday;
Some flattering loudly, and some slandering low.
The temple of the soul was never meant
For such a motley rout; 'tis just as though
A church were turned into a theatre,
And giddy pantomimes played where should be
Devout adorers. No foul careless foot
Should stain the pavement with its miry track;
But every thought, however mean and poor,
Should wear the wedding garment, since it stands
In presence of the great Eternal King.
Man is at all times in the gorgeous pile
Of the grand universe; and hence he should

Be always worshipping. No single thought
Should wander, like a beast, adown its aisles,
Unconscious of the sacred eye of God.
Let every thought be spoken silently
To Him who will not fail to hear. Oh, then
Life will become a ceaseless orison,
And not a lethargy of dreamy sleep
Beneath a huge heaven-hiding cupola,
Which shuts out even God! We dare not think
Of what alone is worth a thought, but haste
To scribble o'er the tablets of the soul
With any foolishness, lest angel hands
Should fill the empty page with holy words
To mind us of the great life yet to come.
And yet we are called rational! It were
Far better to be idiots, than use
Our reason to direct us how to be
Madder than madmen.

---

My youth was but a voyage without a chart,

In an unruddered and uncompassed ship;
A chase towards crimson clouds in the Far West,
Which fancy from her frail and giddy mast
Hailed o'er and o'er for Islands of the Blest,
Where would be found that precious amulet,
Which whoso wears is happy: but, alas!
Who ever found it thus?
And yet I hoped on still, and cried aloud
Fiercely as ever that the gorgeous clouds
Horizonwards were this time plainly land,
And crowded on more sail as hopefully
As if ne'er duped before. Alas! alas!
I had a chart on board, laid down in heaven—
A chart which had led thousands to those shores
Whose very air is joy; and yet, oh fool!
I never used it, but went madly on,
Guessing my course through labyrinths of rocks,
And grazing oft against them. Yea, a leak
Yawned more than once upon my wave-lashed hull,
In storms of sickness, yet I heeded not.

How is it that we walk the crumbling brink
Of a black, hideous abyss, yet turn
Our eyes away, and think not where we are?

## XV.

### FATHER.

Lucy, my child, when I had just passed through
The sheltered lanes of boyhood, and had come
Upon the broader road of youth, my pulse
Was flushed one day with the strong wine of love,
As yours is now; but soon the fit passed off,
And left me nought but headache—so will yours
I have read this letter. Here, my dearest child,
Is one to put beside it; the pale ink
Is dim with age, and the thin sheet is torn;
But, following yours, it is a crystal cup
Of pure spring water after a warm draught
From some still ditch. Compare them. It was sent
By my dear father to——but you will see.

LUCY.

I have read it, father—it is very good;
But is one letter a fair index to
A man's biography? Some men can write
Who do not act.

FATHER.

My child! my dearest child!
Let not the heart be traitor to the soul.
One letter is no test; but this half-truth
Must not be juggled with to cheat the eyes
Of the calm reason. Here is one who writes,
Under strong impulses, to make himself
As fair as may be; and this miniature
Is his ideal—a very sorry type.
His brow is large I grant—his face is fair
In its proportions; but there is no light
From Heaven reflected in his calm cold eyes.

LUCY.

But, oh, my father! I have told him this,

And he has promised—and I do believe
He keeps his word—that he will now begin
To think about the great life yet to come.

FATHER.

Then wait, my child, and prove him. Promises
Grown in the forcing heat of passion are
Too apt to die whilst they are yet in bud;
They are but flashes from the thunder-cloud
Of o'ercharged feeling, not the steady light
Of daily sunshine; they are but the bow
Which vanishes when the brief shower is o'er.
I do not ask too much from him who comes
To take my daughter from me. I know well
That angels live in the far-distant heavens,
And not on earth. But, Lucy, hear me now,
For I am speaking a word straight from God,
And not my own surmisings:—never trust
Your hand in any other which has not
Been hallowed by perpetual lifting up
To heaven in prayer.

Let not the winds of passion blow you off
From this safe mooring, ne'er to wed a man
Whose life is not a daily transcript, made
With reverent care, of His who died for you.

LUCY.

Father, dear father! these are words of gold;
But I am like a child, and choose a coin
By its size, not by its worth, and hence I grieve
Because you do not give me what would please
My foolish fancy most. How weak I am!
'Tis here that my sight fails—I cannot see
Why I and Arthur should not be as friends,
But as friends only, till he wears the cross,
Like a Crusader.

FATHER.

Ah, my dearest girl,
Here is the danger—he may wear that cross
On his mere trappings. Only let us wait
Till he has shown himself a valiant knight,

And not a tourney-gallant who but dons
His clanking bauble-sword, and mounts his steed
To please his lady-love, but steals away
From the red fields of war.

## XVI.

CECIL.

MARY, we erred to let her go from home.

MARY.

We did; and, Cecil, it was surely wrong
That we were not warned sooner. They have let
Our fairy bark get in amidst the rocks,
And then they call out danger. Oh, I wish
That they had told us ere the snowy surf
Was breaking just ahead.

## XVII.

LUCY.

OH, it has broken up my peace to tear
This love away. Dear mother, pity me!

Its young roots ran so deep, and they have left
An ugly chasm. I did so fondly hope
That I should take him down the path of love
Into the path of life; but you, I know,
Think rather that he would have led me wrong.
I am but a weak girl, and cannot tell—
It may be so.

MOTHER.

Dear Lucy, I have felt the torturing shock
When we are dashed against love! for once I thought
That I had lost the man I loved, and then
The sun went out, and I was left alone
To shiver in the dark: but now I see
That I was wrong. And yet, my dearest girl,
I had far truer cause to grieve than you,
For I loved one far worthier.
I grant that Arthur would be called by most
A famous match—that is the phrase—but you
Are wiser, Lucy, than to let yourself

Be dazzled by such tinsel words as these.
He is handsome—granted; but you do not want
A face to look at, but a man to love.
He is clever—very; knowledge has its worth;
But 'tis not what we know, but what we do,
Which fixes what we are. But then you add,
He is kind, good-tempered, and most reputable.
My child, my child! Ah! these are not the things
To make a marriage happy. Can a flower,
However hardy, stand, and grow, and thrive,
If stuck into the earth without a root.
A palace may be beautiful, but who
Would live in it, if built above a chasm,
On a mere shell of rock. There must be more
Than health and wealth and beauty and good sense,
And kindness too, to make a marriage blest.
We have souls as well as bodies, and they gasp
In such a stagnant atmosphere as this.
You love to talk oft of the 'Better Land,'
But speak of it to him, and watch his eye;

It falls, and his voice with it. Ah! I see
You know it is so.
It would be misery to be his wife.
Marriage is sympathy; but here it fails
Where sympathy is deepest, and those hopes
Which make your eyes flash, cast a shade o'er his.

LUCY.

'Tis true; and yet my feelings flow towards him
As waters leave their proper course to rush
Through some unnatural chasm in their banks.
I have escaped, but still the broken chain
Trails from my limping foot; but I have learned
Where is the Fount of peace, and my parched lips
Would drink again. Dear mother, kneel with me.

## XVIII.

CECIL.

THERE are who say that poets should but paint
With neutral greys. A classic elegance

They call it; but names often cheat the eye.
See the Great Artist with a thousand tints
On His grand pallet, and mark how He paints
His sapphire skies, flecked o'er with feathery clouds,
And pricked with spots of gold in the dark night,
The bolts of heaven's pavement;—His green trees—
Ay, but how many hues of green; and see
The sad laburnum weep its shower of gold,
The lilac, many-plumed, the purple beech,
The hawthorn in its bridal dress of white,
The apple blossoming,—to let us know
That the old tree which looks so stiff and still
Is busy, making juices for the fruit
Which he will soon hang out upon his boughs,
To have their soft cheeks reddened in the sun;—
The gorgeous autumn woods, so beautiful,
That even old Winter moans as he sweeps through
To spoil such solemn beauty;—His rich flowers,
Which look as if the gems of the old earth
Had taken root, and grown into the light;—

The rose ablush, as if it had been caught
Gazing with pride at its own loveliness;—
The bashful violet,—the tulip bold
Of its gay beauty,—the rich hyacinth;—
The lily, drooping with its load of charms.
Look at His butterflies—those souls of flowers
Which haunt our gardens and kiss the rich blooms,
Their living sisters;—even His busy bees
Work in right gallant suits of divers hues;—
His peacocks, with their glistering rainbow fans,—
His pheasants, golden-liveried,—His birds,
In sunnier climes, where He has dipped His brush
In richer tints than our grey skies can bear;—
His cattle patched with colour;—His clear streams,
Where darts the spotted trout;—His speckled snakes,
Hideous, yet beautiful, as though they were
The work of some fallen angel, who had kept
His sense of beauty when the sense of love
Had left him;—His striped tigers, spotted pards,
And deer, brown-dappled.

Talk not of statues; look at a fair girl
With cheeks of rose and eyes of violet,
With flesh of alabaster veined with blue,
And hair a rippled mass of jetty silk.
How much of ornament, of varied tint,
Is brought together by God's lavish hand
In one rich landscape—let us try to paint
Like the Great Artist.

## XIX.

MARY.

My God! my God! oh! if it be Thy will,
Grant that my husband may o'ermaster Death
In this dread struggle.

* * * * *

I thank Thee, Father, for the many years
Of happy wedded life which we have known;
But spare him, oh, my God! and take me first.
Yet not my will, but Thine, oh God, be done.

* * * * *

CECIL.

It may be so, that I should have done less,
And trusted more to God. Forgive me, Lord,
If I have failed in faith; but oh, I feel
As if 'twere far too little, not too much,
Which I have tried to do.
But, Mary, hearken to me, for I think
That God will take me shortly to Himself.
Bury me in the midst of those dear graves,
The trophies of our little native church,
Raised up as signs of victory over death.
And if you can, my dearest wife—oh, stay,
And faint not at your work when I am gone;
It is a blessed grace to be allowed
To labour in it. Oh, this foolish world,
Which calls it great to head a furious host
To sweeping murder, but esteems it small
To teach a little Hindu child to spell
The name of Christ; and having taught him this,
The great epitome of all we know,

To show him the few broken specimens
Which men have dug up from the exhaustless layer
Of universal truth which underlies
The whole creation.
What could it comfort me here, as I stand
Upon the black beach of the sea of death,
And hear its mournful, ever-sighing moan,
To know that I had slain a million men
To make a stepping-stone from whence to mount
The empire throne of this old paltry world?
I would not write my history in graves
Upon the green earth, but in living men
Made fit to die.

MARY.

I have no thought of leaving, if you die.
Oh, words of wormwood! which I pray my God
To sweeten with His mercy.

CECIL.

Oh, trust in God, and deem not that your peace

Will die with me. He never sends a cloud,
Through which the beams of mercy do not pierce,
When we look up and humbly ask for light.
I have passed through some bitter frosts of grief,
Forlorn and shivering, with a waning hope
And faith at ebb, and yet I ever found
That sunny sunbursts shot upon me oft,
And cheered me on my melancholy way.

MARY.

My love, I hope in God, and I submit
To His good will without one single throb
Of rebel murmuring; but I still may pray
For your dear life—and oh! my God, I do!

CECIL.

Pray on, my own true wife; for, though I long
To be in heaven, I cannot bid you stay!

* * * * * *

Mary, you must not hope; each passing day
Unwinds a strand from my frail thread of strength,

And soon that thread will snap. I seem to hear
The gates of Paradise, as they sweep wide
Upon their golden hinges, and faint gusts
Come forth and fan my cheeks with their soft wings.
As I gaze up the skies I seem to catch
The flashing of the golden-wingèd band
Coming to fetch me home. Oh, do not weep!—
Rejoice with me! We do but touch the earth—
We cannot grasp it; all our purest joys
Are but the earnests of the joys of heaven.
Our life is but a longer dying—Death—
That sullen angel-demon robed in rags—
Is ever gaining on us in the race,
And is, when least we think so, at our heels.
We kiss our brides, and never think that he
Ere long will push between us his gaunt form.
Our children are but flowers for his lean hand.
But who would therefore murmur, for 'tis Death
Who ushers us into the Better Land.

---

CALM lakes reflect the sapphire dome above,
And the still-smiling, sunny landscape round,
And show the mossy, pebbly depths below;
So here three truths are faintly visible.
Let no brisk reader hurriedly o'erlook
All but the last; for, if he may not tread
In Cecil's shining footprints, he can still
Deny himself for others, and e'er live
In the unsleeping, smiling gaze of God.

THE END.

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